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TRACTS

ON

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT

AND

NATIONAL EDUCATION.

ADDRESSED TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA.

BY

R. D. OWEN AND FRANCES WRIGHT.

“These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose in the
lap of ignorance.”—*Robert Hall*.

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THIS is a republic in which the voice of the people is in theory, and ought to be in practice, the director of the people's affairs. The voice of the people, that is to say, the majority of their votes, ought to decide all great measures. With a few exceptions, trifling except in the state of Virginia, all free male citizens of our country, above the age of twenty-one, have an equal voice in electing those men whose opinions and votes in the respective houses of representatives, afterwards determine the state laws, decide the state taxes, and direct the administration and appropriation of the same.

That is to say: the mass of the people legislates, or rather may legislate, *indirectly*. If those men whom they elect, do vote, not according to their own private opinion, merely because it is their own, but according to the interests and wishes of the majority of their constituents, then the people legislate through their constituents. But if the men of their choice give their votes contrary to the known interests, or to the expressed wishes, of those who have elected them as their representatives, then these men cease to be, in strictness, the representatives of the people at all. They represent no one but themselves; and, in so far as they are concerned, the government is a pure oligarchy.

I say not that this is an evil without a remedy—even perhaps an easy one; nor do I say that, in some instances, the people's representatives are not what the name implies. But it is a fact, than which scarcely any is more notorious, that many members of our legislatures do not even profess to vote with the known wishes of their electors, when these are at variance with their own; and that many more, while professing so to act, most flagrantly violate their profession.

I do not say that a man ought to be compelled or expected to vote contrary to his conscientious conviction, even when that conviction happens to be disapproved by his electors. A certain distinguished member from the west of Pennsylvania, if I have been correctly informed, once voted in decided opposition to his received instructions; and when called to account for his conduct, at the risk of being thrown out, he boldly said, that he could only promise for the future as in the past, to consider every question attentively and candidly, to weigh duly the wishes of his constituents, but never to vote in decided opposition to his own opinions; adding, that his fellow-citizens

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were perfectly right to transfer their voices to the man who might more thoroughly agree with them in sentiment than he had done. His electors received his declaration with applause. As his political life had been consistent, they considered this one instance of dissent as additional proof of his integrity, and accordingly re-elected him. Now I condemn neither the member nor his constituents. In his case, I should probably have considered it my duty to follow my own private conviction of what was best;—and in theirs, to re-elect the man who was honest enough to do what he judged right, at the risk of his popularity.

But our approval or disapproval of the Pennsylvanian's conduct under these peculiar circumstances, does not affect the main question. He himself, in the given instance, might be considered as a legislator, or a guardian, or it may be a disinterested friend of the people; their *representative* he was not. He gave his opinion, not theirs; followed his wishes, not theirs: the power, which they had delegated to him, he employed to oppose what they had desired to support. The people, therefore, in so far as his decision was concerned, were not represented at all. They virtually lost, for the time, their rights of citizens, as completely as if they had been by force deprived of the elective franchise. If that which happened in this particular instance were to happen generally, the people would be as much at the mercy of their governors as are the serfs of Russia or the slaves of the Turkish dynasty.

Now, where is the remedy for evils, which, though trifling perhaps in the case of honest disinterested men, yet involve, in principle, the total loss of political liberty? Shall we expect from those whom we elect a sacrifice of their *opinions* to ours? The more honest and better portion of them may not choose to make the sacrifice. Or shall we expect from our chosen representatives a sacrifice of their *interest* to ours? The less honest and upright portion of them (and alas! how large the majority!) will not deliberately sacrifice what they deem their own, to what they deem the public good.

Where then is the remedy? How shall the people be represented? not lorded over and governed, but *represented*? By choosing those men only whose opinions on all great points are in accordance with the opinions of their constituents; but, above all, in choosing those only whose INTERESTS are the same as the interest of the people.

Let us not "lead into temptation." Let us not elect men to a situation where interest tells them one thing and duty another. They *ought* not, indeed, to yield to the temptation; but that does not mend the matter; they *will* yield to it, if not in all cases, at least in the majority. An immoral situation produces, in the mass of mankind, immorality; and he whose duty and interest point different ways is immorally situated.

The real interests of the working classes are *not* the same as

the apparent and immediate interests of what are called the privileged classes. Yet, in five cases out of six, the representatives of the people are chosen from among lawyers, bankers, large landed proprietors, and rich merchants. In five cases out of six, then, our representatives (as they are inaccurately called) are tempted to do wrong; and if they do right, it is in spite of the temptation.

The people ought to search for those whose personal interests coincide with their own; and ought, for that reason, to choose representatives from among their own body, whenever they can find among themselves men of plain good sense, of firmness, and of practical experience. The working classes, in consequence of the injustice which has meted inordinate labour for their portion, have hitherto had but little time to improve their minds or form their manners. In consequence there are few eloquent, and not a great many fluent speakers among them. This is to be regretted; for eloquence is a giant power in a commonwealth like this. But we must take things as we find them, and make the best of them. The manner is indeed important, but it is much less important than the matter. An indifferent speaker is better than a dishonest man. If, therefore, we cannot find eloquence and honesty combined, let us take the honesty and leave the eloquence; for, thus, if we have less brilliant debates, we shall have more useful laws.

I said that it behoved the people to choose those men for their representatives whose opinions were in accordance with their own; and I shall probably be told, that this is impossible; first because we cannot easily ascertain the general opinion of the body of electors; and then because, even if we could, it might be difficult to find a man conscientiously holding all these, and otherwise capable of fulfilling the duties of a legislator.

But if we cannot do all, let us at least do what we can. If we cannot find representatives who will support *every* measure which their electors desire to carry, let us take those who will support the *essentials*. And, above all, let us not quarrel about the non-essentials.

There are certain great measures which are *indispensable* to the welfare of the people; there are certain master-abuses that *must* be remedied, ere common justice can accrue to the producing classes. To CARRY THESE let the people first unite. Let them elect men, not because they are of Jackson's or of Adams' or of Clay's party, or of any party whatever: *but because they will support and vote for the great measures* which can alone relieve the country from its present distress.

And let the people seek until they find what these great measures are. Having found them, let them vote, not to carry *men*, but to carry *these measures*; not to serve the interests of any political party, but to serve the great interests of themselves, the people.

They have the power in their own hands. Let them seek the

knowledge and the union of purpose and of plan, which can alone make that power effective.

In despotic countries, where it rests with the autocrat to command, and with his slaves to hear and to obey—in lands where the power of one is supported and the obedience of the many enforced, by lance or bayonet—it is not enough to open the people's eyes to their real situation; they must not only be enlightened, they must be armed also. For their will is but of small weight against his who has an army of mercenaries in his pay and at his beck.

Not so in this commonwealth. Whenever the eyes of the people are opened; whenever they know what they desire to effect, and know how to unite their efforts and make effective their acknowledged power—they may carry what measures they will. **THEY HAVE THE POWER.** They may be cheated into a belief that they have it not; they may be urged on to jealousies and internal dissensions and party feuds, that waste each other's strength and neutralize each other's influence; and thus the people may be shorn of their rights, without perceiving how they lose them. But the power they have. They can dictate their own laws, and carry their own measures; can legislate for themselves. And if they be oppressed, if riches and aristocracy legislate for them, and often legislate *against* them—it is the people's blindness, not their impotence, that gives their adversaries the day.

It is not the servants oppressed by their masters; it is the master deceived and tricked and governed by his servants. As American citizens, in whom is vested the elective franchise, we are our own masters. Our representatives are our servants, whom we pay to do our business; not our slaves, but our confidential hired servants. If they attend to their own business instead of attending to ours, they presume on our ignorance, and violate the duties of their situation.

Our situation, then, is good, so far as situation goes. It is right and proper that freemen should be their own masters. But that is not enough. Mere power, without knowledge, is but a useless bauble; rights unexercised are no rights at all; and a master at the mercy of his servants is no better than a slave.

So long as we cannot agree upon the instructions which we will give to our delegates; so long as we do not see these instructions carried into effect; so long as we are careless and negligent, instead of looking after our own affairs; so long are we masters at the mercy of our servants; and so long are we likely to be deceived and oppressed.

If we will change our situation, let us be up and doing. Let us choose faithful servants; not smooth-spoken rogues, nor unprofitable doers of eye-service, but good and faithful servants. Let us retain them in our service so long as they remain faithful; and let us dismiss them when they seek their own emolument, instead of caring for our concerns.

But, above all, let us determine *what instruction we will give them*. If our instructions be contradictory and confused, we cannot be obeyed; we shall spoil our servants; the best of them will resign their situations, and the rest will cheat us if they can. Let us, then, enquire what are the essentials, which the people, for their own sake, ought, through their representatives, to obtain.

Here is the great difficulty. Here lies our weakness, and our oppressors' strength. We know not what we would have. Some of us are tariff, some anti-tariff men; some think the country may be made a paradise by internal improvement; others that our safety can only be insured by the demolition of the banking system; some think the world would be regenerated by communities of common property; others, by labour for labour associations; others, again, by an agrarian law: some think religion only can save the country, others, that religious influence will ruin it: one takes up one particular abuse, and one another. And the worst of it is, each deems his own plan the *only* specific for the national disease; and of course exerts all his energies to bring it into notice in preference to every other.

Here is the secret of our political degradation. Here the cause why the few can ride the many with impunity, and why the many so tamely suffer themselves to be ridden by the few. We are at variance among ourselves, and we waste in party disputes and petty dissensions, the time and the means that ought to be employed in the great work of national improvement.

If this must needs continue, our liberty was but a worthless gift.

But *must* it continue? Is there no point upon which we can *all* unite? Is there no great measure to which we can *all* subscribe? Is there none whose importance *all* will acknowledge, and by whose adoption *all* would feel themselves benefited?

... I believe there is *ONE*. And if there be, how indispensable to our posterity as a nation, that we should see it! and, seeing, that we should unite to obtain it!

It is not a measure that, like the tariff question, will divide the North and the South; nor a local proposal, like laying a railroad, or the cutting a canal. It is not a partial reform, like the suppression of gambling among bankers; nor an untried remedy like the establishment of social communities. Nor is it a startling innovation like the equal division of property; nor even a subject for which our early prejudices may have been enlisted, like that of theology. It is a measure whose benefits all may see, from Maine to Florida, of whatever state, of whatever party, of whatever religion. *It is a NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.*

I would that my voice could extend over our wide republic, that I might repeat in the ears of every citizen, the advice: "Vote for those men only who will support a State Education. Cast aside party feelings. Cast aside favourite schemes. Ask not if your candidate be a mason or an anti-mason, a federalist or a democrat, a friend to national improvement, or an enemy

to banking monopolies—*until* ye have first asked, ‘Will he assist us to obtain for our children that best of patrimonies, whose possession would have saved us all of which we complain?’ Let this be your first question. He is your friend who will honestly answer it in the affirmative; and he your enemy who will say ‘No’ to it; or, saying ‘Yes,’ who will not hold to his word. Let this be the test of your approbation, this the condition of your support, this the one thing needful that shall obtain your suffrage. And you will soon see your children grow up to be freemen indeed. You will see them obtain those advantages, which no nation can obtain and remain oppressed—those advantages which more than riches, more than good fortune, more than situation, more than intrigue, have hitherto given the reigning few power and privileges over the subjected many; and which, when secured to your descendants, will give them their just rank among the free citizens of the world.”

I proceed to give my reasons for proposing A SYSTEM OF EQUAL NATIONAL EDUCATION, as the *first* measure which the people should unite to carry.

In the first place, it is a measure for which all honest republicans, and all not unprincipled parents *will* unite.

It is essential that the people, if they are to effect any permanent improvement in their condition, should not be divided in opinion as to the practical objects after which they strive. I say *essential*; because the people can *not* lose their power, except by disunion. Whatever the people of this republic unite to carry, they *will* carry—against riches, against patronage, against sophistry, against intrigue—against every power which sharp wits, rendered yet sharper by the sense of personal interest, can bring in array to oppose them. But let discord enter the popular fortress, and there is no longer either safety or power. One quarrel within the walls is worse than a thousand enemies without. “A house divided against itself,” says an ancient writer, “can not stand.” And truly and wisely was it said.

This is no petty question of expediency. It is that which will decide *every thing*. Tell me whether the people will succeed in uniting their voices to carry *any* measure, and I will tell you whether the effort will be successful. Inform me that their crafty opponents will be able to sow dissension among the people’s ranks; and, though no prophet, I will predict the people’s discomfiture.

What possibility is there, that the mass of our citizens should be divided on this question of national education? Who, except those who seek to make money and win places by educational inequality, will feel their interest opposed? Who, among the people, that has a child of his own, will not feel his personal interest immediately promoted? What parent is there so lost alike to duty and affection, or so degraded by vitiating habits, that he feels not the desire to see his children saved from the pit into which he has fallen?

Powerful—very powerful is the parental feeling. Even in its excess we may recognise its power. Even when it destroys the tranquillity of the parent, and alas! the welfare of the child, we may see how potent and engrossing its influence. And would it not be beneficial as powerful, were it but wisely directed?

This measure, then, is one which is calculated to unite the zealous suffrages of all upright citizens, and all righteous parents, whatever their sect, their party, or their profession. It contains, then, in itself, the earnest of its own success.

But secondly, it is not only easily attainable, but omnipotent when attained.

Look around upon our country, and estimate, if you can, the extent of its vices, and its miseries. You will find them not of one place, nor of one character, nor of partial influence, you will find them everywhere. Ride along our highways, and every third house you pass shall be a tavern or a gin-shop. Pass through our streets, and in one you will see vanity of dress, pride of wealth, and pompousness of luxury; in the next, half-naked wretchedness, and brutalizing excesses. Enter our courts of law, and see the hatred and hear the bickerings that support in affluence the judge and the barrister. Visit our orthodox temples of religion, and calculate the intolerance they contain and the hypocrisy they engender. Watch the commercial speculations that pour thousands into the already overflowing coffers of some rich merchant or banker, and ruin his less fortunate or more scrupulous neighbour, who drags along with him, perhaps in his bankruptcy, hundreds of honest labourers, and hard working mechanics. Or, inquire in the details of domestic life, and contemplate the jealous struggle of the poor to emulate the rich, and the eager endeavour of all to barter tranquil comfort for a little higher rank, and a little more fashionable standing than the world is willing to accord them. See one half of society, the slaves of etiquette, and the other the victims of excessive labour. Observe how uniformly the hardest labour is made the least productive; and how the reward of an occupation increases almost in the same ratio with its inutility. Mark how one class is doomed to toil for bread, and another privileged to wanton in luxurious idleness. Observe how poor and dependent are the producers, and how rich and powerful the consumers of wealth. And ask yourselves, how many men and women ye have found in the course of your lives—among the rich or the poor, the oppressors or the oppressed—truly honest, truly consistent, truly independent, or truly happy in their generation.

How shall a mass of abuses like these be remedied by piecemeal? How shall they be remedied *at all*, if we reach not the seat of the disease—the human heart? What avails it that our present monopolies are destroyed, if the ignorance remain that first permitted and may again be cajoled to permit them? What would it profit us that all pecuniary inequality ceased in a moment, if the ignorance remain that first produced, and

would soon reproduce it. How should we be advantaged by razing to the ground our banks, our law courts, and our gin-shops, if the spirit of speculation, of quarrelling, and of drunkenness, which at first erected, were still there to rebuild them? In a word, how shall the abuses that mar all the beauty of our national institutions, the vices that stain the fame of our national character, and the miseries that depress or destroy our national happiness—how shall these be removed, but only by an equal, national, intellectual and practical education for all the young citizens of our republic?

We have had enough of declarations; let us have realities. We have said we are free and equal; let us become so. It needs not the chain or the manacle to constitute the slave. There is a slavery beyond that of fetters and dungeons—the slavery that bends not the body only, but the mind, to oppression; that puts man's reason in irons, and shuts out from his reach common sense and practical knowledge. This is the oppression we must destroy; and in the human mind, where it dwells and reigns, there we must destroy it.

Had but equal education been spread over the nations of modern Europe, how altered should we read the annals of the dark middle ages. Where did the feudal barons find their power to enslave, if not in the cowed spirit and loyal ignorance of their degraded vassals? How did the catholic clergy, that proud spiritual aristocracy, that set its sandaled feet on the necks of kings, and in its robes of sackcloth, entered unushered the cabinets of the masters of the world—how did these proud pretenders to holy humility, obtain their despotic sway? Was it not because science had retreated to the cell of the monk, and opened her treasures only within the walls of the monastery? Could feudal or spiritual tyranny have lasted for one year beyond the time that all serfs and all catholics had been taught to find in real knowledge at once their safety, their freedom, and their happiness?

Let us leave the branches then, and strike at the root. They will wither and die of themselves, when the sources are cut off whence they have derived their nourishment. My second reason, therefore for proposing equal national education as the first measure of reform, is because it is a remedy, and the only remedy commensurate with the abuses we purpose to remove.

There are other reasons, though of less weight than those I have already adduced, why we may regard a state education as the measure which it behoves the people, as they value their own happiness and their children's independence, first to unite to carry.

However omnipotent that measure may be, in revolutionizing the character and remodelling all the institutions of society, it is less startling and obnoxious, even to the most orthodox defenders of the things and the powers that be, than are many other far less effective measures. Propose to abolish all banking charters; and, though this could produce but a trifling benefit compared to those resulting from national education, yet while effecting much less,

it would irritate much more. Propose an immediate equalization of property; and though you could have no security that in a single year from the date of that equalization, there would not be rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed, as at present, yet this partial and ineffective reform would create a hundred enemies and opposers, for one that is created against a universal reform by means of education. So, in medicine, are the gentlest remedies often the most efficacious, and come to us doubly recommended, at once by their immediate and by their ultimate effects.

I shall perhaps be told, that the relief afforded to suffering industry by means of instruction to the coming generation, is but prospective and afar off; and that, while promising much in the future, it affords no alleviation for the present. But this objection is surely invalid. If a system of National Education be established, providing at once for the instruction and maintenance of all the children of the republic, and the expenses be defrayed by means of a property tax, and in addition, perhaps, as suggested by my co-editor, in her lecture on Existing Evils, by a light tax on each parent—if, I say, such a system of education and support were carried for the children of *all*, how would the miseries and difficulties of poor families be instantly lightened or removed! When is the sting of poverty the sharpest, if it be not when a father or a mother looks on the sufferings of their offspring—when they see them neglected in body and mind, without power of remedy—and bitterly anticipate for them future hardships and future degradation? Let those poor and hard worked widows of Philadelphia, whom an iniquitous system of trade has doomed to exist and support their helpless children on sixteen dollars a year, or to brave infamy and punishment for a small additional pittance—let them reply.

How would it lighten not the expenses only, but the cares and the sorrows of indigent parents, to know that, whatever they themselves might endure, their children, safe under the parental guardianship of the nation, were secure from the privations of poverty, and participating in the same advantages, mental, moral, and physical, as the wealthiest children in the land!

Where is, at this moment, the great difficulty to the working classes in obtaining just laws, such as shall defend their rights and advance their interest? Their difficulty may be traced to the fact that they can hardly find suitable representatives. And why not find them? Because men in other ranks of life have interests opposed to those of the working man, and men in his own rank have not the educational advantages that enable them easily to compete with the sophistry of the learned student, or the eloquence of the classic scholar. And will not this difficulty remain, until a National Education remove it? Had equal instruction been accorded in the last generation to the child of the mechanic as of the president, how could there now exist the slightest difficulty in selecting from among the producers of all wealth intelligent representatives of their own class—men who, taken from among the people, would legislate for the people; and

who, uniting common sense to literary acquirements, and practical knowledge to theoretical refinement, would act with the plain dealing of an honest republican, think with the enlarged and liberal views of a disciple of science, and speak with the eloquent perspicuity of a man of letters. Thus are our immediate difficulties, equally with all the thousand evils which ignorance has ever produced, to be traced to the carelessness of mankind in neglecting to train up children when young, in the way they should go, that, when they are old, they may not depart from it.

Lastly, National Education is a measure involving no dangerous revolution to rouse the passions, and perhaps to blind the judgment, of mankind. It presupposes no violent change in the structure of society. It is like the silent flowing of the rising tide, not like the impetuous whirl of the engulfing storm. Even if, by mismanagement in its details, it might fail at first to effect all the good we anticipate, experience would soon correct these minor errors: so that with much and increasing good in prospect, there is neither danger to be encountered, nor loss to be incurred.

"Lycurgus," says Plutarch, "resolved the whole business of legislation into the bringing up of youth." When our legislators shall have learned wisdom from the Spartan, they will acquire, as he acquired, the power of remoulding the national character. At present they do not possess it. They can punish, but they have yet to learn how to prevent. They have jails and penitentiaries, handcuffs and treadmills, lawyers and constables, solemn oaths and penal codes; they have yet to learn that these form not men to virtue, though they often make them hypocrites in vice. They have yet to learn the impotence of fear, and the omnipotence of reason.

Let our representatives learn all this, or let us change our representatives. He who knows not the reforming power of National Education, is unqualified to sit in the councils of a nation; and he who knows its power, yet seeks to withhold its benefits from the humblest of his fellow-citizens, still less deserves their confidence or their suffrages.

I have stated the reasons that induce me to regard a State Education as the first object to obtain which the people should combine their exertions and unite their votes. If these reasons be good, let the people awake to action. As they value the noble institutions of America, as they would save their country from the convulsions of a bloody revolution, as they would reform the crying abuses of inequality, as they would check the frightful enormities of vice, as they would build up virtue in the human heart, cherish kindness in the human bosom, and cultivate intelligence in the human mind—in a word, as they value their own and their children's enduring welfare, let them awake to action. Let them *unite* for action. The struggle is for no paltry prize; it is for the reality of those blessings which were declared ours half a century ago. This is the time and this the country for such a struggle. Soon may it commence, and speedily as happily may it terminate!

R. D. OWEN.

PLAN OF
NATIONAL EDUCATION.

THE industrious classes have been called the bone and marrow of the nation ; but they are in fact the nation itself. The fruits of their industry are the nation's wealth ; their moral integrity and physical health is the nation's strength ; their ease and independence is the nation's prosperity ; their intellectual intelligence is the nation's hope. Where the producing labourer and useful artisan eat well, sleep well, live comfortably, think correctly, speak fearlessly, and act uprightly, the nation is happy, free, and wise. Has such a nation ever been ? No. Can such a nation ever be ? Answer, men of industry of the United States ! If such *can* be, it is here. If such *is* to be, it must be your work.

Here the people govern ; and *you* are the people.

And you are becoming apprized of this. You are learning your power. In New-York, in Philadelphia, in Boston, in Baltimore, you have looked round and distinguished that all is not well. In Philadelphia you have tried your strength ; in New-York you have proved it. In New-York, six thousand votes have appeared at once in the ballot box, on which you had written REFORM.

This has been, indeed, a show of strength, and a sign of determination. As such it has been hailed far and wide, by every friend of human improvement. Through the counties of this powerful state, every mind looks to the metropolis. There *they* have touched the lever who alone can move it. The people have aroused themselves where they are the strongest—in the cities. There at length they have said, “ We have the power, and we will use it.” Yes, men of industry ! you have the power ; and it is now with you wisely to steer the vessel of the state into safe harbour, or rashly to peril it in the deeps and shallows of anarchy and stormy contention.

Much, I will not say *all*, depends on your first move. I will not say *all*, because I believe that, even in spite of errors and blunders, the national institutions, and the good sense which they, in spite of all countervailing influences, have sufficed to generate, would lead you right at last. But *much* depends upon your first move. The honour of the cause depends upon it ; the honour of the nation in the eyes of the world depends upon it ; the honour of the nation, and your own honour in your own eyes depend upon it. Move then warily. Take one step at a time, and let that step be always such as you can keep. He who draws back is always weakened ; and he who hurries forward with blind speed, must always draw back or stumble. Touch *skilfully* as many minor abuses as circumstances and your own knowledge may permit. Check the banks ; limit or repeal charters ; tax church property ; investigate the nature of its tenure ; secure the more immediate interests of the working classes, by procuring

the legal acknowledgment of their claims where now they are unheard;—all this will be important, and well, and of immediate utility, if done wisely. But as respects great measures (and all such as above enumerated, are but trifling; are but the lopping off of branches, not the severing of the root)—as respects great measures, attempt but one at a time; speak of but one at a time; if possible, think of but one at a time. Let one, and one *great measure* alone, engross for a long season your thoughts and unite your efforts. Recal your own youth, and you will understand what that measure ought to be. Look at your children, and you can never forget it. Examine yourselves—weigh your own deficiencies, and you will appreciate all its importance, and its omnipotence.

Pledge yourselves, then, men of industry! pledge yourselves, minds, hearts, and votes, to that one measure—that saving, that regenerating, that omnipotent measure. That one measure, by which alone childhood may find sure protection; by which alone youth may be made wise, industrious, moral, and happy; by which alone the citizens of this land may be made, in very deed, *free and equal*. That measure—you know it. IT IS NATIONAL, RATIONAL, REPUBLICAN EDUCATION; FREE FOR ALL AT THE EXPENSE OF ALL; CONDUCTED UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE STATE, AT THE EXPENSE OF THE STATE, AND FOR THE HONOUR, THE HAPPINESS, THE VIRTUE, THE SALVATION OF THE STATE.

Until equality be planted in the mind, in the habits, in the manners, in the feelings, think not it can ever be in the condition. Equalize fortunes at this hour, and knavery in one year would have beggared honesty; improvidence would have dissipated its possessions; credulous simplicity would have yielded all to the crafty hypocrite; error would still deceive ignorance, and a ready tongue and a forward spirit, would still banish modest worth to the shade.

But it is not enough to forbear from rash and futile measures; they should not be talked about. Hot heads and hasty spirits will indeed urge to false movements, seek to outstrip time and circumstance, and strain to make effects precede their preparing causes. But a self-respecting people will check the zeal of imprudence, and the intemperate haste of unreasoning or false-reckoning inexperience. They will begin well, that they may end well; they will move slowly and firmly, that they may move unitedly and surely; they will begin with what touches the interests, and may convince the understandings of the great body of the nation, that opposition may be weak and co-operation strong. They will unite on that measure without which every other must be ineffectual, and which must be preparatory to every reform. They will unite on that measure, which, in principle, is so righteous, that the hypocrite dare not openly slander it; so constitutional, that the crooked politician dare not openly oppose it; so universally beneficial, that not one honest man can lift his voice against it.

Unite, then, men of industry ! on this measure, and you disarm your enemies ; unite on this measure, and all the sound part of the population are your friends. The vote of every righteous parent and every honest man will drop into your ballot box : and your ticket shall carry at the first general struggle, not in your city only, but throughout your state.

Take now then betimes your stand, men of industry ! Organize yourselves, prepare your minds, strengthen your numbers, turn a deaf ear to the clamour of enemies ; defeat by order, and union, and steady perseverance, the tricks of roguery. Fix your eyes upon the great object—*the salvation and regeneration of human kind, by means of the rational education and protection of youth.* Study this great object in all its bearings, follow it out in all its consequences and effects ; digest the means by which it may be secured ; let it engage your thoughts and supply your conversations ; speak of it at home and abroad ; win to it the attention of your wives and of your children themselves ; interest all you love, and all you know, and, if possible, all with whom you come in contact, in weighing its advantages, and advancing its execution !

Bear in mind, men of industry ! that *you are the people* ; and that here, by acknowledged right and acknowledged law, *the people govern.* Govern then for yourselves and your children, and for the nation of which you now form the hands, and the feet, and the trunk, and of which you must form *the head* before the head can be in union with the body it regulates. Govern as fathers as well as citizens, as citizens as well as fathers. Bear in mind that the stay and prop of liberty is knowledge ; that the basis of just government is rational education, and, that the life of a republic is equal education. Lay then the true foundation of practical republicanism. Bind all your efforts to the one great measure of a uniform plan of education for all the children and youth of your several states ; and let that plan be in perfect unison with the nature of man, the nature of things, and with the declaration of your country—*all men are free and equal.*

THE measure I am about to suggest, whenever adopted, will, in the outset, alleviate those popular distresses whose poignancy and rapid increase weigh on the heart of philanthropy, and crush the best hopes of enlightened patriotism. It must further, when carried into full effect, work the radical cure of every disease which now afflicts the body politic, and build up for this nation a sound constitution, embracing at once, public prosperity, individual integrity, and universal happiness.

This measure, my friends, has been long present to my mind as befitting the adoption of the American people ; as alone calculated to form an enlightened, a virtuous, and a happy community ; as alone capable of supplying a remedy to the evils under which we groan ; as alone commensurate with the interests of the hu-

man family, and consistent with the political institutions of this great confederated republic.

I had occasion formerly to observe, in allusion to the efforts already made, and yet making, in the cause of popular instruction, more or less throughout the Union, that as yet the true principle has not been hit, and that until it be hit, all reform must be slow and inefficient.

The noble example of New-England has been imitated by other states, until all not possessed of common schools blush for the popular remissness. But, after all, how can *common schools*, under their best form, and in fullest supply, effect even the purpose which they have in view.

The object proposed by common schools (if I rightly understand it) is to impart to the whole population those means for the acquirement of knowledge which are in common use; reading and writing. To these are added arithmetic, and, occasionally, perhaps, some imperfect lessons in the simpler sciences. But, I would ask, supposing these institutions should even be made to embrace all the branches of intellectual knowledge, and thus, science offered gratis to all the children of the land, how are the children of the very class, for whom we suppose the schools instituted, to be supplied with food and raiment, or instructed in the trade necessary to their future subsistence, while they are following these studies? How are they, I ask, to be fed and clothed, when, as all facts show, the labour of the parents is often insufficient for their own sustenance, and, almost universally, inadequate to the provision of the family without the united efforts of all its members? In your manufacturing districts you have children worked for twelve hours a day; and, in the rapid and certain progress of the existing system, you will soon have them, as in England, *worked to death*, and yet unable, through the period of their miserable existence, to earn a pittance sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger. At this present time, what leisure or what spirit, think you, have the children of the miserable widows of Philadelphia, realizing, according to the most favourable estimate of your city and county committee, sixteen dollars per annum, for food and clothing? What leisure or what spirit may their children find for visiting a school, although the same should be open to them from sunrise to sunset? Or what leisure have usually the children of your most thriving mechanics, after their strength is sufficiently developed to spin, sew, weave, or wield a tool? It seems to me, my friends, that to build school houses now-a-days is something like building churches. When you have them, you need some measure to ensure their being occupied.

I hasten to the rapid development of the system of instruction and protection which has occurred to me as capable, and alone capable, of opening the door to universal reform.

In lieu of common schools, high schools, colleges, seminaries, houses of refuge, or any other juvenile institution, instructional or protective, let the state legislatures be directed (after laying off

the whole in townships or hundreds) to organize, at suitable distances, and in convenient and healthy situations, establishments for the general reception of all the children resident within the said school district. These establishments to be devoted, severally, to children between a certain age. Say, the first to infants between two and four, or two and six, according to the density of the population, and such other local circumstances as might render a greater or less number of establishments necessary or practicable. The next to receive children from four to eight, or six to twelve years. The next from twelve to sixteen, or to an older age if found desirable. Each establishment to be furnished with instructors in every branch of knowledge, intellectual and operative, with all the apparatus, land, and conveniences necessary for the best development of all knowledge; the same, whether operative or intellectual, being always calculated to the age and strength of the pupils.

To obviate, in the commencement, every evil result possible from the first mixture of a young population, so variously raised in error or neglect, a due separation should be made in each establishment; by which means those entering with bad habits would be kept apart from the others until corrected. How rapidly reform may be effected on the plastic disposition of childhood, has been sufficiently proved in your houses of refuge, more especially when such establishments have been under *liberal* superintendence, as was formerly the case in New York. Under their orthodox directors, those asylums of youth have been converted into jails.

It will be understood, that, in the proposed establishments, the children would pass from one to the other in regular succession, and that the parents, who would necessarily be resident in their close neighbourhood, could visit the children at suitable hours, but, in no case, interfere with or interrupt the rules of the institution.

In the older establishments, the well directed and well protected labour of the pupil would, in time, suffice for, and then exceed, their own support; when the surplus might be devoted to the maintenance of the infant establishments.

In the beginning, and until all debt was cleared off, and so long as the same should be found favourable to the promotion of these best palladiums of a nation's happiness, a double tax might be at once expedient and politic.

First, a moderate tax per head for every child, to be laid upon its parents conjointly, or divided between them, due attention being always paid to the varying strength of the two sexes, and to the undue depreciation which now rests on female labour. The more effectually to correct the latter injustice, as well as to consult the convenience of the industrious classes generally, this parental tax might be rendered payable either in money, or in labour, produce, or domestic manufactures, and should be continued for each child until the age when juvenile labour should

be found, on the average, equivalent to the educational expenses, which, I have reason to believe, would be at twelve years.

The first tax on parents to embrace equally the whole population; as, however moderate, it would inculcate a certain forethought in all the human family; more especially where it is most wanted—in young persons, who before they assumed the responsibility of parents, would estimate their fitness to meet it.

The second tax to be on property, increasing in per centage with the wealth of the individual. In this manner I conceive the rich would contribute, according to their riches, to the relief of the poor, and to the support of the state, by raising up its best bulwark—an enlightened and united generation.

Preparatory to, or connected with, such measures, a registry should be opened by the state, with offices through all the townships, where on the birth of every child, or within a certain time appointed, the same should be entered, together with the names of its parents. When two years old, the parental tax should be payable, and the juvenile institution open for the child's reception; from which time forward it would be under the protective care and guardianship of the state, while it need never be removed from the daily, weekly, or frequent inspection of the parents.

Orphans, of course, would find here an open asylum. If possessed of property, a contribution would be paid from its revenue to the common educational fund; if unprovided, they would be sustained out of the same.

In these nurseries of a free nation, no inequality must be allowed to enter. Fed at a common board; clothed in a common garb, uniting neatness with simplicity and convenience; raised in the exercise of common duties, in the acquirement of the same knowledge, and practice of the same industry, varied only according to individual taste and capabilities; in the exercise of the same virtues, in the enjoyment of the same pleasures; in the study of the same nature; in pursuit of the same object—their own and each other's happiness—say! would not such a race, when arrived at manhood and womanhood, work out the reform of society—perfect the free institutions of America?

FRANCES WRIGHT.

EDUCATION IN NEW ENGLAND.

BY PROFESSOR TICKNOR, OF BOSTON.

THE system of universal education has now, therefore, become, to a remarkable degree, the basis of the popular character which marks the two millions of people in New England. The laws, indeed, differ in the six states, and have been altered in each, from time to time, since their first enactment; but all the states

have laws on the subject; the leading principles are the same in all of them; and the modes of applying them, and the results obtained, are not materially different. Indeed, in almost every part of these six states, whatever may be the injunctions of the law, the popular demand for education is so much greater, that the legal requisitions are generally or constantly exceeded. The most striking instance of this is, perhaps, to be found in the city of Boston, where the requisitions of the law could be fulfilled by an expenditure of three thousand dollars annually, but where from sixty to seventy thousand are every year applied to the purpose. And yet multitudes of the poor and small towns in the interior show no less zeal on the subject, and, in proportion to their means, make no less exertion. The mode in which this system of popular education is carried into effect is perfectly simple, and is one principal cause of its practical efficiency. The New England states are all divided into territorial communities called *towns*, which have corporate privileges and duties, and whose affairs are managed by a sort of committee annually chosen by the inhabitants called *selectmen*. These towns are of unequal size; but in the agricultural portions of the country, which contain four-fifths of the people, they are generally five or six square miles; and upon them, in their corporate capacity, rests the duty of making provision for the support of free schools. This duty is fulfilled by them, in the first place, by voting, at a meeting of all the taxable male inhabitants over twenty-one years old, a tax on property of all kinds to support schools for the current year, always as large as the law requires, and often larger; or, if this is neglected by any town, it is so surely complained of to the grand jury by those dissatisfied inhabitants, who want education for their children, that instances of such neglect are almost unknown. The next thing is to spend wisely and effectually the money thus raised. In all but the smallest towns, one school, at least, is kept through the whole year, in which Latin, Greek, the lower branches of mathematics, and whatever goes to constitute a common English education in reading, writing, geography, history, &c., are taught under the immediate superintendence of the selectmen, or of a special committee appointed for the purpose. This, however, would not be carrying education near enough to the doors of the people, in agricultural districts, to enable them fully to avail themselves of it, especially the poorer classes and the younger children. To meet this difficulty, all the towns are divided into districts, varying in number, in each town, from four to twelve, or even more, according to its necessities and convenience. Each district has its district school committee, and receives a part of the tax imposed for education; sometimes in proportion to the population of the district, but oftener to the number of children to be educated. The Committee of the district determine where the school shall be kept, select its teacher, choose the books that shall be used, or delegate that power to the instructor, and, in short, are responsible in all

particulars, for the faithful fulfilment of the trust committed to them; the general system being that a school is kept in each district during the long winter months, when the children of the farmers are unoccupied, by a male teacher, capable of instructing in reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, and history; while in the same school-house, during the summer months, schools are kept by women, to instruct the smaller children in knowledge even more elementary. In this way, for the population of New England, consisting of two millions of souls, not less than from ten to twelve thousand free schools are open every year, or, on an average, one school to every two hundred souls—a proportion undoubtedly quite sufficient, and larger than would be necessary, if the population were not in many parts very much dispersed.*

* On this point no one has spoken with more power than Mr. Webster, who, alluding, in public debate, to the free schools, where he himself received his earliest training, said,—“In this particular, New England may be allowed to claim, I think, a merit of a peculiar character. She early adopted, and has constantly maintained the principle, that it is the undoubted right, and the bounden duty of government, to provide for the instruction of all youth. That which is elsewhere left to chance, or to charity, we secure by law. For the purpose of public instruction, we hold every man subject to taxation in proportion to his property; and we look not to the question whether he himself have, or have not, children to be benefitted by the education for which he pays. We regard it as a wise and liberal system of police, by which property, and life, and the peace of society, are secured. We seek to prevent, in some measure, the extension of the penal code, by inspiring a salutary and conservative principle of virtue and of knowledge in an early age. We hope to excite a feeling of respectability, and a sense of character, by enlarging the capacity, and increasing the sphere of intellectual enjoyment. By general instruction, we seek, as far as possible, to purify the whole moral atmosphere, to keep good sentiments uppermost, and to turn the strong current of feeling and opinion, as well as the censures of the law, and the denunciations of religion, against immorality and crime. We hope for a security, beyond the law, and above the law, in the prevalence of enlightened and well-principled moral sentiment. We hope to continue and prolong the time, when, in the villages and farm houses of New England, there may be undisturbed sleep within unbarred doors. And, knowing that our government rests directly on the public will, that we may preserve it, we endeavour to give a safe and proper direction to that public will. We do not, indeed, expect all men to be philosophers or statesmen; but we confidently trust, and our expectation of the duration of government rests on that trust, that by the diffusion of general knowledge and good and virtuous sentiments, the political fabric may be secure, as well against open violence and overthrow, as against the slow but sure undermining of licentiousness.” (*Journal of Debates in the Convention to revise the Constitution of Massachusetts*, 1821, page 245.)

FINIS.

